

IN THE CLAIMS

1.-10. (Cancelled)

11. (Currently Amended) A method of watermarking an image, comprising:
associating digital metadata with each sub-image ~~image-object~~ of two or more sub-images ~~image-objects~~ of an image; and
encoding the digital metadata into two or more sub-watermarks ~~data-layers~~ of a digital steganographic watermark of the image, wherein each sub-watermark ~~one or more selected data-layers~~ of the two or more sub-watermarks ~~data-layers~~ encodes the digital metadata associated with a selected sub-image ~~image-object~~ of the two or more sub-images ~~image-objects~~.
12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11, wherein encoding the digital metadata into two or more sub-watermarks ~~data-layers~~ of a the digital steganographic watermark of the image further comprises encoding the digital metadata into two or more sub-watermarks ~~data-layers~~ of a digital steganographic watermark of the image, wherein ~~where~~ the digital steganographic watermark is a high coding rate watermark.
13. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11, wherein encoding the digital metadata into two or more sub-watermarks ~~data-layers~~ of a the digital watermark of the image further comprises encoding the metadata into two or more sub-watermarks ~~data-layers~~ of a the digital steganographic watermark of the image, wherein ~~the watermark contains two or more sub-watermarks~~; each sub-watermark of the two or more sub-watermarks ~~is of a~~ differing encoding method and/or transform.
14. (Cancelled).
15. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11, encoding the digital metadata into two or more sub-watermarks ~~data-layers~~ of a the digital steganographic watermark of the image further comprises encoding two ~~one or more~~ data fields of digital metadata ~~areas~~ in at least one of the two or more sub-watermarks ~~data-layers~~ of the digital steganographic watermark.

16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11, further comprising:
encoding two or more sub-watermarks ~~layers of digital metadata~~ in a the digital
steganographic watermark in one or more image objects of the image.
17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11, wherein encoding the digital metadata
into two or more sub-watermarks ~~data layers of a~~ the digital steganographic watermark of
the image further comprises encoding at least one of a manufacturer information data
field layer, an object characteristics data field layer, an order information data field layer,
and a manufacturer designated data field layer.
18. (Currently Amended) A method of digital steganographic watermarking two or more sub-
images at least one sub-image of an image, comprising:
encoding a plurality of fields ~~layers of metadata associated with each sub-image of two or~~
more sub-images of an image data in a digital steganographic watermark of each sub-
image of the image at least one sub-image of an image, wherein the plurality of layers
~~of data are metadata associated with the at least one sub-image.~~
19. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 18, wherein encoding the plurality of fields of
metadata associated with each sub-image of two or more sub-images of the image ~~layers~~
of data in the a digital steganographic watermark of each sub-image at least one sub-
image of the image further comprises encoding the plurality of fields of metadata
associated with each sub-image ~~layers of data~~ in a high coding rate digital steganographic
watermark.
20. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 18, wherein encoding the plurality of fields of
metadata associated with each sub-image of two or more sub-images of the image ~~layers~~
of data in the a digital steganographic watermark of each sub-image of at least one sub-
image of the image further comprises encoding the plurality of fields of metadata
associated with each sub-image ~~layers of data~~ in a the digital steganographic watermark
containing a plurality of sub-watermarks of the sub-image, each sub-watermark encoded
with a different steganographic encoding method and/or transform.

21. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 20, wherein each field of metadata associated with each sub-image is layer of the plurality of layers of data are encoded into a separate digital steganographic sub-watermark.
22. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 20 ~~claim 18~~, wherein encoding the plurality of fields of metadata associated with each sub-image layers of data in a the digital steganographic watermark of each ~~at least one~~ sub-image of the image further comprises encoding one or more fields of metadata data-areas in each sub-watermark of the plurality of sub-watermarks ~~two or more layers of data of the at least one~~ sub-image.
23. (Currently Amended) A computer-usable medium having computer-readable instructions stored thereon for execution by a processor to perform a method comprising:
associating digital metadata with each sub-image image-object of two or more sub-images image-objects of an image; and
encoding the digital metadata into two or more sub-watermarks data-layers of a digital steganographic watermark of the image, wherein one or more selected sub-watermarks data-layers of the two or more sub-watermarks data-layers encodes the digital metadata associated with a selected sub-image image-object of the two or more sub-images image-objects.
24. (Currently Amended) The computer-usable medium of claim 23, wherein encoding the digital metadata into two or more sub-watermarks data-layers of a the digital steganographic watermark of the image further comprises encoding the digital metadata associated with a selected sub-image into two or more data-layers of a digital steganographic watermark of each encoded in the selected sub-image image-object of the ~~two one or more sub-images image-object of the image, where the digital metadata associated with a selected object of the one or more image objects is encoded in the digital steganographic watermark placed in the selected image object.~~

25. (Currently Amended) The computer-usable medium of claim 23, wherein the two or more sub-watermarks ~~data layers~~ are encoded in a high coding rate digital steganographic watermark.
26. (Currently Amended) The computer-usable medium of claim 23, wherein ~~the digital steganographic watermark contains two or more digital steganographic sub-watermarks,~~ each sub-watermark is of a differing steganographic encoding method and/or transform.
27. (Currently Amended) The computer-usable medium of claim 24 ~~claim 26~~, wherein the metadata associated with each sub-image of the two or more sub-images is encoded in two or more sub-watermarks of the digital steganographic watermark of the sub-image ~~each of the two or more data layers are encoded into a selected digital steganographic sub-watermark.~~
28. – 58. (Cancelled)